to know Americans have nothing against Serbs. We opposed what Mr. Milosevic did.

And the third question you asked me was about my impressions of Mr. Milosevic. I am reluctant to say much, you know, because at home people are always psychoanalyzing me. You know, they meet President Clinton, "Why was your President President Clinton?"

I think he is a very intelligent man. I think that he can be charming. But I think there are two problems that he has, that have proved fatal. Number one, he has built his political power on the idea of the religious and ethnic superiority of Serbs and their inherent right not only to be a part of but to completely dominate whatever he decides is "Greater Serbia." He thought it was what is generally the Republic Srpska, now, in Bosnia. He took the autonomy away from Kosovo, which it once had. Now you have Hungarians in Vojvodina, and you have the Montenegrans worried, because he basically has created this fear, this paranoia, in the Serbian population, and then he fed it, like a fire, with the bodies and lives of others.

Now, you know, there were other excesses in this region. The others are not pure. But he created this whole thing, and he drove it home in Bosnia, and then he drove it home in Kosovo. And I think he had—in other words, I think he had a dark and terrible idea.

The other thing I observed from watching him is, perhaps because of the tragedies of his own life—he had terrible tragedies, you know, as a child, with his parents and all—I feel very badly about it, but I don't think he feels the way normal people would feel when they make decisions that cost people their lives.

I know, you see, I know when I ordered those airplanes to fly over Serbia, I knew innocent people would die, and I hated it. And the only reason I did it was because I knew I was saving many, many tens of thousands of people's lives, more than would die.

I think to him it doesn't matter. That's the only thing I can conclude. After watching 250,000 people die in Bosnia and seeing these stories of these children raped and these children—they were draft-age boys—killed en masse, and these people wrapped up in a circle and burned alive, and it happens over and over and over again—I can only conclude that he has no—for whatever reason, he doesn't have normal feelings.

So those are my two problems with Mr. Milosevic. I think this idea of ethnic and religious superiority is the biggest threat to civilization in the world today, not just in the Balkans—Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Africa, you just go right down the line, everywhere in the world. In the United States—we had a guy go crazy the other day and kill a bunch of people of different races in the United—did you see it? In two States?

Q. Yes.

The President. Killing these people. Why? Because he belonged to some crazy religious cult that convinced him he had the right to do that.

So that's what I feel. I think it's quite a tragedy because he's an intelligent man, and he can be an engaging man. And I talked to him in Paris, and I thought we had an understanding. I was quite surprised actually in the beginning—he knew after what I did in Bosnia that I would do this. So I don't know how he could have thought I was bluffing him after what we went through in Bosnia, when I said, if you do what you intend to do in Kosovo, this is what I will do. He should have been under no illusion. I think he thought maybe the other Europeans wouldn't stay hitched.

But I made a decision—I agonized through 2 long years of what we went through in Bosnia, and I was not about to let all those people die again. I just was not. I couldn't do it. So, anyway, that's my impression. I think it's quite a tragedy really, because he has a lot of ability.

Q. Thank you.

Bosnia After the Dayton Accords

Q. Mr. President, we talk about—what are the basis for the optimism regarding peace Stability Pact for the Balkans if we know how little politicians from the former Yugoslavia work on the implementation of the Dayton peace agreement?

The President. I would make two points. First of all, I think both here and perhaps in Europe and the United States, we tend to underestimate how much progress has been made in Bosnia since Dayton. That is,

there are common governmental institutions; there's a common currency. After the economy was completely destroyed, it's been growing at about 40 percent a year since then. I realize it's got a long way to go because it was at nothing. The shared institutions have functioned in many ways. So I do not believe that we have made no progress. I think the biggest problem with the Dayton agreement is we still have 1.2 million refugees who haven't come back. And the return of refugees in areas where they are minorities is still very slow.

But if you look at the leadership of Mr. Dodik in the Republic of Srpska, for example, I think he's been quite a progressive, cooperative person. I met with both Prime Ministers today, as well as the three Presidents.

So what I draw from watching what has and what hasn't happened since Dayton is that we need more help to this whole in governance, that is, what kind of legal changes do you have to make to get people to put their money in your country and put your people to work? How do you fight, more effectively, crime?

But the crime problems in the Balkans—you know, that we have organized crime all over the world now—it's not just here. So it's just really a question of do you have the capacity to fight it. You shouldn't feel that there's something wrong, intrinsically wrong with your region because you have this organized crime problem. It's everywhere in the world. So the real issue is, do you have the capacity to fight it? We have to build that. So I think that's important.

Now, in addition to that, the reason I'm optimistic about the Stability Pact is that I think that the experience of Kosovo, coming after the experience of Bosnia, was very sobering for me and for the European leaders. And I think we saw clearly that if we didn't want another Balkan war, we had not only to take a strong stance against Mr. Milosevic and against ethnic cleansing; we had to offer a better future for all the people of the region. There had to be a way to bring people together around a common economic and political future within the region, and then a way to bring the region closer together with the rest of Europe and to keep us involved in a positive way.

So that's why I'm optimistic. I think that all these people who came here today, I think they understand that. I don't think they're kidding. I think they really know that—well, let me make one other point—backup, if I might.

In 1993, when I became President, I realized that we had fought two World Wars in Europe; that we had had this long cold war with communism in Europe; that before the 20th century, Europe for hundreds of years had been afflicted by wars as people sought advantage of land; and that for the first time ever, we now had a chance to build a Europe that was democratic everywhere, that was drawing together in a common political and economic union and that was at peace; and the biggest threat were the religious and ethnic conflicts of the Balkans.

I think now, after all this work of the last 6 years, we now know that unless we build a common economic future and a common political future, we're going to have—there will someday be another Balkan war. And that's why I'm optimistic, because I think we have learned our lessons, and I think we are ready to make this common commitment.

One more. Yes, let him ask one more, and then we've got to go.

Corruption in Southeast Europe

Q. With new power, we have new problem, corruption. Does the international community intend to fight against our corruption?

The President. Yes, but a lot of it is you have to do it yourself, and we have to help you fight against it because—and you see this everywhere. Again, a lot of former socialist states convert to democratic states and privatize property, but when we privatize—when we have private property in America, we also have strong economic institutions to preserve the integrity of the economy, to keep dishonesty out. We have strong, sophisticated law enforcement institutions, and even we still have problems. Everybody has problems.

So, I think you should—you shouldn't feel that there's something wrong with your country because this vulnerability is everywhere.